Public Relations as Dialogic Expertise?

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> "[D]ialogue, discourse...we all like these words...Do they mean enough to us?" (R. Heath)[1]

Dialogue has been at the centre of public relations theory for about thirty years; to be more precise, the key concerns of the theory of dialogue have been worked on in public relations by researchers and writers using concepts of symmetrical communication, relationship management, or responsibility since the late 1970s. Seen in this way, the key question in the field has been one of purpose of public relations as a professional activity, i.e. What is public relations for? The answer, suggested in 1976 by Grunig's turn to the concept of symmetrical communication—which he subsequently identified as the first step towards the theory of excellent public relations (Grunig et al, 2006, p.23)—was that public relations should be guided by values of equality, reciprocity, and the civic ethos.

The intellectual origins of this view and its consequences have been widely debated by numerous authors over the years (for example McKie and Munshi, 2007; L'Etang, 2008; Grunig 2001; L'Etang and Pieczka, 1996; Pieczka, 1997). The intention of this paper is neither to go over this terrain again nor to sketch a history of ideas in the field, but to show how the key concerns about the purpose and ethics of public relations have remained at the centre of attention in some of the most important theories; how they resonate with *dialogue*; and, in this way, to reflect on the nature and positioning of public relations expertise. The paper is written from a particular perspective, i.e. public relations scholarship conducted in the medium of the English language; other perspectives, histories and debates can, therefore, only be incorporated in this discussion if they have been made accessible through an English translation or a publication in English.

The discussion here focuses on symmetrical communication, relationship management and responsibility (as understood within Corporate Social

[1] This comment was made as part of the discussion in a Public Relations Division session 'Discourse and dialogue: A public relations approach to organizational rhetoric' (24 May 2009) during 59th Annual ICA Conference in Chicago.

Responsibility) for two reasons: they clearly occupy a very important place in textbooks and research; they also offer a good way of identifying the central conceptual space in public relations: not because they are exclusive in their concerns, but because they exemplify them so clearly.

The following extracts drawn form key texts delineate the central conceptual space.

Grunig:

> With the two-way symmetrical model, practitioners used research and dialogue to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes and behaviours of both their organizations and publics. (2001, p. 12)

Pearson:

> What are the structural characteristics of a communication system that promotes communication, negotiation and compromise (Grunig & Hunt 1984)? What are the structural characteristics of a communication system that promotes what Ehling (1984, 1985) called *message-exchange* or *communication-as-conversation*, or what Ackerman (1980) called *neutral dialogue*, or what Habermas (1970, 1984) called *communication symmetry*? How can these characteristics be evaluated and measured? […] A fruitful way to begin to look inside the idea of symmetrical communication is to introduce […] *dialogue*. (1989, pp.70, 71)

Ledingham and Brunig:

> Broom and associates (1997) advanced a model for constructing theory concerning organization-public relationships centred around the properties, antecedents, and consequences of organization-public relationships.[…] we suggested that concepts of *openness*, *trust*, *involvement*, and *commitment* may act as dimensions of the organization-public relationship. (2000, p.58)

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> […] public relations as a form of *public communication* […] is associated with multiple, special relationships to society. These responsibilities stem from the need to practice ethical communication and the concomitant

> emphasis on two-way communication and dialogue in the public arena. […] The concern for balancing the needs of society and the needs of clients produces a tension that may be difficult to manage. PR professional may find it challenging to function as "the conscience of the organization". (2007, pp. 28-29.)

What the discipline deals in is communication, what id deals with is 'relationship'. Although acknowledgement is made that relationships are build from communication as well as other kinds of action (for example, product or policy related ones), communication occupies the privileged position. Furthermore, communication is defined, initially at least, by the dichotomy of symmetry/asymmetry (Grunig and Hunt, 1984) which describes the relative positions taken by the parties involved in communication and the concomitant communication behaviours. This, however, is not a purely descriptive distinction; these are value-laden terms and the normative stance articulated on the basis of this distinction favours symmetrical communication. The rationale for this position is drawn from a number of sources, some of them known and acknowledged more directly and used more extensively than others.

The following discussion is merely a sketch of the key ideas, writers and theories woven into the public relations scholarship (by which I mean research, writing, academic publications and textbooks). The idea of symmetry in communication theory can be traced back to research in interpersonal communication and cognitive psychology. The key moment in the development of this idea is Theodore Newcomb's article (1953) offering the co-orientation model of interpersonal communication as a way of explaining the dynamics of human interaction. Symmetry here refers to the specific feature of human communication, namely the link between similarity of interlocutors' orientations towards the object of communication and the influence the perception of this state of affairs has on the parties' subsequent orientation to that object. In other words, the closer interlocutors see themselves to each other in their views on a subject (i.e. in their cognitions and evaluations), the more confident they become in these views, and that change happens in a co-related manner, affecting the whole system, not juts its individual parts. Newcomb also asserts that symmetry functions as 'secondary reward value', or to simplify, it is perceived as desirable, as good (pp.394-395). Public relations scholarship has recognised these ideas very

directly in textbook references to co-orientation (Cutlip et al 2000; Broom and Dozier, 1990; Tench and Yeomans, 2006) and indirectly in the idea of symmetrical communication and excellent public relations which is present in much research and writing (see Toth, 2006; Grunig et al, 2007).

The intellectual link which is buried more deeply is that to Deweyan pragmatism. One of the key themes in Dewey's work was the fundamental role of communication in democracy and community-building (Evans, 2001, p.773). He sees that role as going beyond transmission of facts and information and instead as being the way in which the shared territory and social bonds are constituted,

> [m]en live in a community by virtue of things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to posses things in common (Dewey cited in Evans, 2001 p. 773).

Writing about his own work on co-orientation in the study of organizations as a study of dialogue, Taylor connected Newcomb and Dewey by their shared 'ontological stand on the nature of organization': they both see it as 'emerging *in* and *through* communication' (2004, p.126).

The same can be said to be the defining feature of another key idea reflected in public relation scholarship—the concept of the public sphere. Habermas' interest focused on the constitution of public legitimacy for democracy through communicative action, i.e. public communication conducted within a set of rules regulating the conditions and relationships which need to be present for communication to proceed. These are: intelligibility (relates to mutual understandibility of the utterance), truth (propositional content of the utterance being transparent and agreed to by the listener; truthfulness (sincerity, the speaker seriously and exactly intends what is expressed); and appropriateness (a claim that the speaker is acting in accord with socially shared norms and rules) (Burleson and Kline 1979, p.417; see also Burkart 2009, p.146). In other words, the basis for substantive agreements rests on procedural communication rules.

The ideas discussed so far view communication as the fabric of human society and as the fabric of its political life. Corporate Social Responsibility tackles the problem of responsibility from a different angle. Rather than relationships between individuals, or

individuals as citizens, CSR takes as its subject the relationship between corporations—legally constituted entities involved in economic activity—and individual citizens, i.e. between private economic activity and public life. Much of the legitimacy of corporations is defined by their legal obligations, but what is of interest for public relations scholarship lies outside that boundary and deals with phenomena such as public opinion, or to draw from the public relations expert repertoire, with reputation and image (Carroll, 1991; McMillan, 2007; Cowe and Hopkins, 2008). The importance of these phenomena lies partly in their potential link to public debates about legislative change and public policy as they impinge upon the arena of corporate action, and partly in their importance for the competitive market positioning pursued by corporations. Another important point to make is that these phenomena are largely symbolic, constituted through various practices of representation. It can be argued that relationship management is another technique of managing that soft boundary of social responsibility. As illustrated above, in public relations theory relationship management is understood as communication activity producing cognitive and affective outcomes measured as trust, openness, involvement and commitment.

A brief note relating to the history of these ideas is in order here. The idea of symmetry in communication became popular in 1950s, in the same decade in which the idea of dialogue began its modern career. Publication of Martin Buber's *I and Thou* in 1958[2] is often referred to as the starting point in the story of modern *dialogue* because of the profound influence of the ideas it contained. In fact, as Stewart et al point out (2004, pp.33-34) the term *dialogue* did not appear in that seminal work, but was introduced in a later essay "Dialogue" (1965) aimed at explicating the key principle of human life to which *I and Thou* was devoted — the two-fold orientation that characterises human encounter with nature and other human beings, the I-it (subject-object) orientation which is in tension with the I-Thou orientation (Stewart, Zediker and Black, 2004, p.32).

[2] The book was published in its original German version in 1923, translated into English in 1937.

At first, *dialogue* was the domain of philosophy, humanistic psychology and person-centred psychotherapy (Rogers, Tournier), education and theology (Buber, Freir)[3] work before it was taken up by communication scholars in 1970s, starting with

> [...] Johannesen's (1971) groundbreaking early essay in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, in which he identifies dialogue as an "emerging concept" for the discipline and charts its prominent characteristics (Anderson et al, 2004, p.5)

Equally important to note is the fact that many textbooks in interpersonal communication starting in 1970s 'were in tune with many of [dialogue's] assumptions' (Anderson et al, 2004, p.7) and, consequently, popularised the idea. The political impetus to modern study of dialogue in public life is usually attributed to Jurgen Habermas whose work has been accessible in English translations since 1970s onwards. Although his most influential work was published later, starting in mid-1980s[4], his earlier work on theory of communication had already attracted attention and discussion: a special issue of *Journal of the American Forensic Association* was devoted to him in 1979, and a longer article on Habermas appeared in *Quarterly Journal of Speech* in the same year (Anderson et al, 2004, p.6). This revival of interest in *dialogue* had a profound influence on ideas about communication ethics, for reasons put in highly charged language by Krippendorff a decade later when he described dialoguing as

> an ongoing process that respects the autonomy of different reality constructions, enables each participant to interrogate his or her own history and grow beyond it. Dialogue is the most noble form of human interaction... (1989, p.94)

Thus when public relations scholarship turned to ideas of symmetrical communication in its broad sense of search for shared understandings, honesty, listening, and genuineness; these ideas were well established in communication scholarship.

Subsequently, the study of dialogue became a rich multidisciplinary field, producing debate and much applied work, particularly since 1990s. In order to reflect on the

[3] The references normally given in this context in addition to Buber's I and Thou are: C. Rogers, *Client-centered Therapy*, 1951, *Freedom to Learn* 1969; P. Tournier, *The Meaning of Persons*, 1957; P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970;

[4] (The Structure of the Public Sphere 1989, Communicative Action, vols 1 & 2 in 1984 198?),

status of the concept in public relations, it is important to understand what was happening in this respect in other disciplines. I shall focus on two academic disciplines, management—or more specifically organizational communication—and political science, because of the focused and sustained theoretical effort linked to significant practical engagement in solving real-life problems for organizations and communities apparent in both of these disciplines.

Dialogue is a somewhat slippery term: it is a word with a long history in English, it has changed its meaning, or rather acquired new meanings, especially in the second part of the 20th century, and any definition is complicated by its colloquial usage reflecting various aspects of the term's history (see Wierzbicka, 2006). The basic definition of the term she arrives at lists eight key characteristics of the phenomenon and offers a useful start to this discussion,

'dialogue'

1) is a process which goes on for some time, not continuously, but in separate episodes;
2) is a group activity, prototypically involving two groups, and it is reciprocal; consists in talking about a particular range of topics – presumably, topics of mutual interest;
3) [involves participants who] are aware of their differences: there can be no 'dialogue' between people with the same, or very similar, views. At the same time, it shows that they are aware that the subject matter is important to both sides and that it is emotionally charged: both sides feel something when they think about things of this kind;
4) is not merely an 'exchange of ideas'; it is not just a matter of knowing **what** the other group thinks, but of understanding **how** they think, and being similarly understood oneself;
5) [refers to participants who] do not aim at resolving all differences between the parties and achieving a common way of thinking, at least not in the sense that each group will shift its thinking and as a result get closer to the other group. Rather, it is hoped that the two groups will discover some common ground – possibly, through the clarification of their respective positions. It is also hoped, however,

that both groups are open to the possibility of change in their thinking;

6) [requires an] attitude of respect and goodwill;
7) [participants in 'dialogue'] *refrain* from saying [certain things]: one doesn't attack or even criticize one's partners (unless one wants to kill the dialogue);
8) is seen by participants as valuable and productive in itself. In due course the two groups are expected to discover that about *some* things at least they can think the same and, as a result, their thinking on some points may change. (Wierzbicka 2006, pp. 689-690)

There is no fundamental disagreement among scholars and practitioners of dialogue about any of the features included in this long, descriptive definition; where there are differences, the arguments focus on the emphasis put on some rather than other of these features, on the nature of the specific definition adhered to, and on practical applications. Linder deals with the task of sorting through various approaches by relating them to two classical models of dialogue: the Socratic and the Athenian models. While the first one is defined as 'Socratic interrogations in pursuit of self-knowledge and virtue', the latter refers to 'Athenian deliberations for collective governance' (2001, p.653). In short, they represent two directions present in the western conception of dialogue: inquiry and will formation (p.652). Linder uses these models to think through modern ideas on dialogue and argues that the work of Gadamer (1989) and Bohm (1996) (for discussion see Stewart, Zediker and Black, 2004), two names usually found on the short list of 'fathers' of modern dialogue, represent the primary interest in dialogue as 'a route to discover new ways of understanding or to reach what is hidden from view' (Linder, 2001, p.654). The modern thinkers falling in step with the Athenian model are Habermas and Dewey (1927) who view dialogue as a way for participants to 'form commitments, common purpose and to reaffirm the symbolic bonds of culture' (p.655).

Another way of thinking through the differences was proposed by Stewart and Zediker (2000) who talk about descriptive and prescriptive approaches. The first see dialogue as the 'pervasive defining feature of humanity' in the way Bakhtin (1981)

does; the latter argue that 'human meaning-making is inherently *relational*', but only a particular kind, or quality of relating is called dialogue, following Buber's views (Stewart et al, 2004, p.21).

These differences in views become particularly helpful when one considers practical application of dialogue. Political communication has been particularly interested in dialogue as a way of improving citizen participation in politics and reinvigorating the idea of democracy as deliberative democracy (Gastil and Levine, 2005; Gastil, 2008). While the normative, ethical argument for enhancing opportunities for citizens to deliberate can be drawn from Habermas, there has also been much interest in the effects deliberation has on citizen' political efficacy, i.e. the feeling that political participation has an impact on political process (for discussion see Morrell, 2005). Although there is some debate about the issue and current research recognises that the relationship between deliberation and citizens' political efficacy is still poorly charted (Delli Carpini et al, 2004), it is possible to think about the effects of deliberation in terms of increased social and political capital (Morrell, 2005, p.65).

Equally noteworthy from the point of view of this paper is the evidence of a nuanced understanding of dialogical communication in the two disciplines under consideration. Morrell (2005, pp.55) refers explicitly the possibility that different types of deliberation—the term he uses for face-to-face public communication among citizens—may produce different outcomes. He identifies three main types: civic dialogue, deliberative discussion, and deliberative decision-making. On closer inspection, these three types of deliberation represent a spectrum of dialogue from inquiry to will formation. While a civic forum is predominantly focused on understanding, on diversity and ability to talk and learn; deliberative discussion is more focused on specific policy or decision making area and on building citizens knowledge, but not necessarily consensus. Deliberative decision making, on the other hand, is oriented towards a goal of making policy decisions through dialogic communication. It is reasonable to expect that the outcome aimed at in each of these types of deliberation will shape the exact form communication takes, in other words, different outcomes can be linked to different techniques.

Many techniques and examples of real-life projects using dialogue can be found in literature. For example, the Public Conversation Project (http://www.publicconversations.org/) and National Issues Forums (http://www.nifi.org/about/index.aspx) in the US, which started in 1989 as groups of people interested in ways of improving and growing deliberation in civic life (Gergen et al, 2001). They have since become non-profit organisation developing deliberative techniques, training volunteers, and supporting deliberative projects. A fuller exposition of public deliberation is presented in Gastil (2008, p.192-206) who lays out examples such as: sequenced forums, which as he admits is a rather clumsy term that refers to a reworked Town Hall meeting; deliberative polls, a combination of random sampling as in opinion poll and deliberation among groups constructed in this way; or citizen juries, a smaller version of deliberative polls. Further examples could be offered from other countries (see Gastil and Levine, 2005), however, the point, has already been made: there is an extensive body or knowledge and practical expertise about public deliberation which works with dialogue as an innovative way of achieving goals outside communication. All of the sources referred to in this paragraph offer details on dialogue as a technique by breaking the process down to elements and describing how these should be managed, for example by laying out details of preparation, approaches to putting groups together, articulation of aims, moderation techniques, and evaluation.

Dialogue is also a topic of interest and a source of applied techniques in management studies. As in politics, there are numerous not-for-profit organizations and consultancy services which promote and sell this expertise. As an academic interest, dialogue can be linked to the Appreciative Inquiry approach to managing organizational development, usually dated back to 1987 (Cooperrider and Srivastva,1987)[5]. The AI approach originates in a philosophical shift in the position taken on knowledge and action. The positivist stance of objective, disembodied knowledge is given up in favour of a stance similar to that underpinning the philosophy of dialogue. Organizational knowledge resides in an organization acting as a complete whole, rather than any in particular part of the organization. Knowledge is seen as an appreciation of the creative nature of organizational life, and it becomes

[5] For a more detailed history of the idea see: http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/timeline.cfm

known through a process of inquiry which captures personal stories and insights, which uses communication as a process of shared discovery and reasoning. However, dialogue, as both a philosophy and a technique is more clearly discussed in the context of the Learning Organization concept, specifically linked to Peter Senge and a group of academics at MIT. William Isaacs' book *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together* (1999) is the most famous work articulating dialogic principles in the context of their application to solving organizational problems, rather than, as we have seen earlier, those of public political life. Like many other guru books, it is a mixture of theoretical knowledge, articulation of a technique, with a touch of proselytizing added into the rhetoric.

Isaacs' version of dialogue while putting a strong emphasis on collaborative inquiry is also very clear about problem-solving application of such communication:

> *Dialogue*, as I define it here, is about a shared inquiry, it is a way of thinking and reflecting together… (1999, p.9)
>
> If the problem of thinking together is both personal and larger than personal — then what is needed is a powerful set of practical tools and practices that can help us deal with both dimensions. They must produce pragmatic, successful results out of difficult conversation…. (1999, p.3)

The book then proceeds to introduce specific skills (listening, respecting, suspending and voicing) as well as designing the dialogic interaction, to which Isaacs refers as the 'architecture of the invisible'. One element of his design is the well-known idea of a dialogue container, something like a setting, both physical and normative, shaping the rules of engagement to enable a particular kind of interaction to emerge.

Another dialogic technique with business (and beyond) applications is the World Cafe: a particular way of running dialogues, also now promoted through a not-for-profit organization called The World Cafe Community Foundation (http://www.theworldcafe.com/) founded in 2001. The World Café is build around the practice of small group conversations, and a managed way of mixing groups to promote diversity and sharing of ideas in order to work towards problem solution. Confusingly, one of the directors and contributors to the book showcasing the approach, *The World Cafe* (Brown, 2005) is called David Isaacs.

Turning to public relations treatment of *dialogue*, it becomes clear fairly quickly that despite the centrality of the relational approach in public relations scholarship, demonstrated in the first part of the paper, the concept is somewhat marginalised and 'actual examples of dialogic public relations are very difficult to find' (Meisenbach and Feldner, 2009, p.253). The most comprehensive discussion of the concept was offered by Kent and Taylor (2002) who provide a bridge between public relations and organizational communication literature on the subject and go beyond the Habermasian framework by referring to the inherent unpredictability of dialogue and the consequent risk involved in engaging in dialogue (p.28) and by hinting at a more nuanced distinction between dialogue and related forms of communication:

> [d]ialogue is not synonymous with debate—which is the clash of ideas—but rather, dialogue is more akin to a conversation between lovers where each has his or her own desires but seeks the other's good (p.27)

I see these as particularly important points in the discussion precisely because there is very little in public relations scholarship to help us think about how dialogue can become an expert communication skill. Beyond familiarity with Habermas' ideas and their application to measuring levels of understanding in communication between organizations and their publics in a model of *Consensus-Oriented Public Relations* (Burkart, 2009), we have Pearson's approach to dialogic organizational systems which also draws on Habermas in proposing that validity claims can be re-interpreted as communication rules. However, I have not come across evidence showing application of Pearson's ideas in public relations research or practice.

The potential for a more comprehensive engagement with the concept of dialogue offered by Ken and Taylor (2002) has so far has been associated with work on dialogic features of websites, or more generally, the Internet (McAllister-Spooner, 2009; Kent and Taylor 1998; Kent et al, 2001, 2002). On the one hand, this represents a theoretically good fit, given the original excitement about the interactive features of the new communication technologies (Chadwick 2006, pp.22-27); on the other hand, there is a danger inherent in the methodologies used so far of reducing the search for genuine dialogue to somewhat mechanistic principles of building feedback loops, or 'dialogic loops' (Kent and Taylor, 1998, p.326). Despite the identifiable stream of

research in that direction, McAllister-Spooner concludes that, 'the dialogic promise of the Web has not yet been realized' (2009, p.321).

The only other way public relations scholarship deals with dialogue is indirectly by studying relational outcomes of communication dynamics as suggested by Ledingham (2003). Although, the approach has much to commend it, on its own it cannot deliver the way for public relations to work with *dialogue*, for a number of reasons.

The first limitation is the conceptual difficulty with the assumption that an organization or a company enters into relationship with individuals in a way that can be treated using interpersonal communication models. Dialogic theory (and symmetrical communication) is based on interaction of individuals, or groups of individuals and face-to-to-face communication. However, when we as individuals enter into communication, or even a relationship with an organization, we operate in this relationship by retaining a clear sense of the differences in the legal positions between participants in the communication, a degree of sensitivity to strategic needs both our own and the organisation's, and a sense of expectation of what our mutual obligations in the relationship and the extent of the relationship are. In other words, if I am in a relationship with my bank, I have no illusion that I am a customer, or a potential customer for a related service (such as personal finance advice), or part of some other strategic plan, and that our relationship is predicated on the bank's position, both legal and competitive. Any other stance on my part could be seen as a sign of lack of basic social competence. There does not seem to be a sufficient recognition of the delimitations and subtleties of 'relationship' in such contexts in the literature. Secondly, the task of reconnecting relational outcomes to behaviours tends to focus on *my* behaviours towards the organisation, rather than on mutual changes: for example, in conflict scenarios (Huang, 2001) or in deciding whether I will continue or sever my relationship with the organisation (Brunig at al 2004). Dialogue implies mutuality; relationship measurement finds it hard to deal with mutuality: the line of inquiry tends to look at relationship as predictor of the public's behaviour, not the organization's. Thirdly, by situating the link between the organization and its publics, organizational members seem to be marginalised, if not excluded altogether, from this theory: What or who is the organization that enters into the relationship with

this internal public? To sum up, the phenomenon of relationship is, perhaps unavoidably, simplified by the methodological decisions in this approach.

Finally, the discussion of public deliberation in public relations literature using classical sources and ideas so far has not helped much in understanding *dialogue*. It has principally been focused on dealing with the legitimacy of persuasion in public life, and has preferred to stick with *rhetoric* as it key term (Heath, 1992, 2000, 2009; L'Etang 1996). Heath's treatment of rhetoric leads him to offer the idea of 'rhetorical dialogue'

> First ethical standards that guide the practice are continually refined by rhetorical dialogue; the limits of one set of ethical principles is a counterset that seeks to elevate practice. Second, public relations adds value to society because of the rhetorical dialogue by which interested parties .... forge standards of business and public policy that create mutually beneficial relationships that add social capital to community. Third, public relations adds value to the marketplace and public policy area because open dialogue gives people an opportunity to participate in as well as witness *discussions* (statements and counterstatements) by which *customers* (markets) and *publics* (stakeholders/stakeseekers) examine facts, values, policies, identification and narratives leading to wiser purchases and more sound public policies. (2000, p.71)

Comparing Heath's treatment of rhetoric and dialogue with that of Linder's (2001) models of dialogue, it becomes clear that perhaps insufficient attention is paid to different philosophies and traditions behind idea. The term *deliberation* might fit better in this proposition about how public communication contributes to social wellbeing. In this article, as in his earlier writing on rhetoric, Heath is heavily influenced by the notion of rhetoric (or rhetorical dialogue) as a statement and counterstatement dynamic, a rather adversarial model of debating retained in his most recent published work in the topic (2009). An interesting departure from this style of writing and references framing his ideas on dialogue can be found in his discussion with organizational scholars in 2006, where he seems much more in step with the theory of dialogue as developed in that particular discipline (Heath et al, 2006).

What, then, does dialogue mean in public relations? It is poorly understood and used marginally both in research and textbooks. Extensive discussion, models for application and consultancy based on this knowledge exist in political communication, community building and organizational communication, but not in public relations. This is a curious state of affairs as there seems to be something of a disjuncture between the discourse about the core of public relations field as a discipline, the focus of it pedagogy and, one could also propose, the practice. As the paper has demonstrated, research and theorising deals with dialogue to a limited extent, textbooks do not cover the term or offer any discussion of dialogue techniques, and dialogue does not seem to appear in discourse used by practitioners to present their work, judging from a cursory examination of websites of professional bodies in the UK CIPR, PRCA and a number of well established consultancies). The conclusion I draw is that public relations functions and presents itself very successfully as advocacy practice and pays very little attention to dialogic communication either in research or pedagogy.

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